1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

PREFACE

101 is relatively small, and is localized in the interior of French
619 Guiana, not far from the Dutch boundary. In any consideration of the Guiana Negroes, yet a fourth group must be kept in mind—that of the Negroes of the coastal region, who remained enslaved until their emancipation in 1865.

●487 The country of the Saramacca people is reached from Paramaribo, the capital and port of the colony of Suriname (Dutch Guiana), by the weekly train which goes some ninety-five miles to Kabel, where the railway meets the river. From Kabel transportation into the far interior is by dugout canoe, owned and manned by Saramacca men.
133 The country above Kabel, which the Saramacca people call the "big bush," is jungle. Over the watershed lie the Amazon basin and the forests of northern Brazil. Once in this region, the traveler has no contact with European civilization, though he is still under the protection of the Dutch Government.

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114 The picture which we draw of the Saramacca people is based upon two field trips to Dutch Guiana, undertaken in the summers of 1928 and 1929. During our second trip we traversed the entire stretch of the Saramacca country from below Kabel, where the Awka villages are located, to the last native habitation on the Pikien Rio, beyond which are some fields, then uninhabitated miles of wilderness to the Brazilian border.

The ethnological work conducted among the Saramacca tribe of Bush Negroes and the Negroes of the coastal region of Suriname represents a portion of an investigation into the physical and cultural characteristics of the Negroes of the New World. This research, which is still in progress, has included field work in the United States, in Dutch Guiana, and in Africa, and some comparative study in the islands of the Caribbean. It began in 1923 with an inquiry into Negro-white crossing in the United States.[1] As the work progressed it became evident that the problem

[1] For the results of this portion of the investigation, see M. J. Herskovits, "The American Negro, a Study in Racial Crossing" (1928); and "The Anthropometry of the American Negro" (1931).

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

of the Dahomean kingdom by the French. All other walls are of swish. Today in West Africa the automobile and sewing machine have found their way into remote corners. But more important still than these changes wrought by European civilizations, which have made inroads chiefly on the material life of the Africans, are those resulting from intertribal wars, which followed the introduction of guns and gunpowder into Africa and which helped to establish the great West African dynasties. The result of the conquest of one native people by another was constant cultural interstimulation which made for changes in the indigenous civilizations.

In the Guiana bush, however, where these runaway Negroes and their descendants have been living, the fortunes of African kingdoms, the cultural contacts that have affected the Africans, have not touched their own tribal destinies. Neither has the civilization of the white man nor that of the Indian introduced basic changes into their manner of living or thinking.

There are no roads in the Guiana bush, and what footpaths exist to connect one village with another are difficult to follow and, moreover, are not for the stranger, whether he be white or mulatto. For such as these the highway is the river, with native paddlers alert in their surveillance of a stranger's activities. The old men on the river have made a tradition of recalling the struggle of the ancestors for freedom and survival, and it is not without significance that one of the three worst crimes among the Bush Negroes—one that ranks with incest and murder—is informing on a Negro to a white man.

In contrast with this isolation of the Bush Negroes, the Negroes of Paramaribo have known close contact with the whites, with Carib and Arawak Indians, and in more recent years with the Hindu and Javanese laborers brought to the colony. Only suggestions of the manner in which the beliefs of town and bush correspond or differ can be included here, since this account concerns itself with the Saramacca people. Yet for the understanding of this study it must be

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1834
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

But Bayo's pleasant story came to an abrupt end. Down toward the bank came Sedefo and his companion, motioning the men to join him. They all gathered in front of the guard of palm fronds, and began to discuss something in low voices, while from the village came the staccato rhythms to the Sky God and to the Kromanti spirits in tones at first soft, but swelling and quickening as they continued.

Sedefo came up to us at last and said, "I will tell you something, but you must not think the people of Pa'aba are unfriendly. I will tell you this. Let us go on and make camp farther up the river. There is a provision ground not too far away. We will make it in time."

In the boat Bayo told us that many were possessed in the village, and since here at Pa'aba they danced Kromanti strong, the men did not think it safe to bring us to the village. The year before Kasanya had spent a trying night here. Two or three of the men had found guns and had gone tearing about the village, so that not alone had the women shut themselves up in their huts, as they often did at Kromanti dances, but the men, too, had had to go in hiding.

"That is why we are going on. But I have a strong Kromanti spirit myself. I will go back to Pa'aba tonight and watch the men dance," he said with a laugh.

3

It was already quite dark when we made the planting ground. Up a narrow footpath we followed Kasanya.

"*Koni, koni*—Take care, don't trip at night," he kept calling to us. "*Mbwogu*—Hurry," he urged, though we needed no urging to keep close behind him in this narrow dark shaft which cut the greater darkness of the bush in two.

Bibifo would sleep in our boat to watch the provisions, Kasanya explained as he led the way, for the clearing was so far from shore that it was not wise to leave the boats unwatched.

"It is far," he said. "Grounds are cleared that way—not too near a village, not too near the shore."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR3 Bush Negroes SR3
Saramacca

THE PROVISION GROUND

It is told that this practice of isolating the provision ground was a heritage of the days when the ancestors were escaping from slavery, for then the whites were at war with them, and villages had often to be deserted. But to desert a village was one thing. What local spirits were there could be urged by the proper magical invocations to follow to another site. Men did not, after all, derive their food supply from a village. It was the provision ground upon which life depended. The provision ground had at all costs to be saved. Access to it was, therefore, made difficult. Trails were never clearly marked, and were often marked to mislead the invading enemy. The river bank was allowed to give no hint of shielding, behind the thicket, a clearing where crops grew to feed the warriors and their families. When a village was destroyed by the enemy, the Bush Negroes fell back on their fields and maintained life. To this day, it is said, this practice holds, for though hostilities ended more than a hundred years ago, the planting grounds are rarely found close to a village.

Walking behind Kasanya in the darkness which gave to each down-hanging vine the outlines of the great aboma snake, held sacred in this bush, we fell to wondering whether in this, as in so many instances, the accounting for current beliefs, in terms of the experience of slavery alone, would prove inadequate.

"We have arrived, Bak'a," said Kasanya, interrupting our speculations. His eyes were sharper than ours, for not even when he spoke did we see the widening of the path and the clearing beyond. Yet fewer than a hundred additional paces found us facing four small huts scattered about a sandy open place, and a woman who was on her way from one house to another turned toward us. She listened to what Kasanya said, with her head slightly averted, pulling at her pipe all the while.

"Ai, they can stay," she said, pointing to the largest of the four houses. "As many of you as can, sleep there. The house next to it is for provisions. We have not much to offer here."

Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Surinam

Later, through the gathering darkness, the people of the neighboring villages went home, paddling their boats which were loaded down with the fish that had been netted. And from this time on, everyone knew that this neku vine was the property of him who had found it, and of his family, down through his mother's line, forever.

"Ai, mati, you would have seen something, if you had got here for the neku dance!"

6

Like any other Bush Negro village, S'ei was a series of sandy clearings about which were grouped huts of woven palm fronds and palm thatch. All about was the big bush. The trails which led from the village were each guarded by a magically treated palm azang, and shrines to the ancestral spirits who saw to it that evil was kept away. Where the several paths led, a stranger was not encouraged to discover. Down one, women were to be seen disappearing in the morning with trays on their heads, their infants astride their backs, held inside the folds of a cloth which was fastened high above their breasts, and caught up again below them. In many upper river villages, this path led to the fields, some distance away. Others were the way to shrines, erected to those spirits which must be worshiped outside the village. Another path might lead to a brook, which the villagers held sacred. There were trails, too, which connected neighboring villages, and led perhaps farther yet, but for the stranger, the highway was the river, and no matter how short the distance between one settlement and another, he was not invited to make his way through the bush.

"You do not want to go through the bush, white man. In the bush are evil spirits," we heard many times.

A village clearing was divided into quarters. Each quarter was inhabited by one of the *máa*, or extended families, and the quarter bore its name. It was composed of several households—five or six or more, depending upon the size of the

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Hot sun . . . Gush of rapid water . . . Bees and dragon-flies cruise about. . . . Rain . . . Hot sun . . . There is a crash of branches in the bush; some animal, probably a tapir. . . . Kingfishers chase each other over the yellow bosom of the river. . . . Talkee-talkee chatter. . . . The white man curses the flies. . . . That tiny speck a mile high is a vulture, wheeling without effort in great circles. . . . Rapids . . . Cloud-banks in the sky. High-lights on the river . . . Hot sun . . . Poling up the rapids . . . Grunting Negroes lean on the slick wet poles. . . . Still water . . . The paddlers step overboard to drag the boat up a difficult piece of rapid water. . . . The canoe is stuck on a rock. . . . It swings broadside to the current. . . . The river almost wins; we get away by a hair's breadth. . . . Over into the still water . . .

Moi-Man sings a Djuka song. . . . Alligators sunning on sandbanks . . . Gorgeous Morpho butterflies go by on shimmering blue wings. . . . Jewellery is made from them. . . . Showers of little white butterflies cross the stream, fluttering tirelessly. . . . A feast for the swallows . . . Spray from the fast waves . . . Wet tarpaulin over the baggage . . .

The forest is as impassable now as it was in the days of the rebellion. There is no way of penetrating the interior except by travelling up one of the great rivers of Surinam. The Bush Negroes spend much of their time on the rivers; their water-craft is exquisite. To make the laborious passage upstream the expedition is entirely dependent upon these black polers. They consent to accompany the white men—*bakkras* as they are called—with no great eagerness. The Djukas realize that

/6 cont./

824 wood is too hard to be worked with ordinary instruments or, on the
contrary, because it is too soft, too easily attacked by insects, or
311 has a tendency to rot. The zone exploitable by native procedures
is limited (for the floodable zones /1/ do not allow fine woods)
to the slope of the hills bordering the valley of the watercourses
accessible to pirogues; beyond, the cartage of felled trunks be-
comes impracticable.

139 A very dense epiphytic vegetation connects the trees with
134 their upper parts; it is there that life blossoms out: flowers, birds,
insects, and monkeys.

484 Progress through the forest is very arduous. The undergrowth,
483 shrubs, bushes, bound together by fine and elastic lianas, offers
[132] a constant obstacle, the machete /sabre/ must be wielded at each
[412] step. The nature of the terrain, a succession of bogs and hills
[133] with steep and slippery slopes, makes walking for heavily loaded
men exhausting. On the trail one succeeds with difficulty in
making more than 15 to 20 kilometers a day; in the uninhabited
forest one can scarcely advance five to six kilometers a day by
cutting the strict-minimum as one does when hunting. The open-
ing of a route permitting the passage of heavily laden men cannot
progress more than three kilometers a day on the average.

137 The great forest offers few real dangers, but it is an environ-
182 ment profoundly hostile to man, which does not present spontane-
ously any food resource and allows establishment of villages and
cultivated areas only at the price of great efforts.

136 One meets few animals in the interior of the forest, and the
resources for hunting are very limited; on the other hand, there
are few harmful animals; wild beasts are few and practically do
not appear; snakes are much rarer than on the coast and represent
164 only a slight danger. The most real dangers of the forest come
from the fall of branches and epiphytes, principally when it is
cleared for cultivation; each year there are accidents of this kind
in Boni country. Besides, work in the forest is the occasion for
many wounds which tend to ulcerate.

/8 cont./

241 experience of the American Indians, which seem the only utilizable
179 ones in the interior of the country.

Thus these populations which are so varied have in large measure the same agriculture and the same food.

241 Basic crops are manioc, consumed in the form of couac
[242] (flour roasted and granulated) which is the base food, the Indian
[171] yam, and tubers analogous to taro (dachine, "Caribbean cabbage"). The Refugee Blacks plant mountain rice in addition. The Creoles do not plant rice but have on the other hand a greater variety of vegetables and fruits.

311 Men in Guiana live on the rivers; villages and cultivated
321 lands are to be found on their banks; everywhere else one finds
182 only the deserted forest; only Creole gold miners, constrained by their work, sometimes establish their villages far from watercourses.
181 The Refugee Blacks, like the Indians, love the rivers where they
182 find, along with water and light, the possibility of moving with-
171 out hindrance; they are a people of canoeists; their traditions are widely influenced by life on the river, and their mode of living finds in this a deep originality.

131 In fact, setting aside the gold miners' villages, we can say
133 that the populations of the Guianas living by exploitation of the
182 natural resources of the country have a linear habitat: it can be
171 estimated not in surface but in length, for it is limited to a band of one kilometer along each watercourse accessible to pirogues. These watercourses are limited in number, for one can take for granted that at a distance of some 20 kilometers from the source of each river, the congestion caused by fallen trees and parasitic vegetation prevents easy movement.

[161] Actually, considering the very low density of the population,
[226] the small rivers are scarcely utilized except as fishing places.

489 All the rivers are interrupted by falls and rapids which render
501 the use of large boats impossible. The pirogues of the Refugee

/8 cont./ The Pirogues of the Refugee

B 487 501 505

Blacks, carrying a useful load of from 1,000 to 2,000 kilograms, are the normal means for provisioning the placers and European settlements of the Interior. The use of outboard motors on these small boats tends to become more general, but navigation remains difficult and dangerous and the Refugee Blacks continue to draw the essential part of their resources from these trips. /Fig. 1 appears here./

/9/ Populations

B F 162 648

The Maroni Basin is relatively populated if it is compared with the rest of Guiana. The population includes three human groups which are very different from one another and have absolutely no tendency to merge although they maintain friendly relations.

F 101 177

1) Creoles. This is the name of the colored persons who lead a life with individual characteristics and have adopted European forms of life in part, by contrast to the Refugee Blacks who live in tribes under the command of chiefs. African blood is dominant in the Creoles, especially among the gold miners.

F 144

In 1958 there were no more than about 800 Maroni Creoles, almost all gold miners or traders, grouped principally around the little Surinam mining center of Benzdorp; very small villages of gold miners are scattered along the principal tributaries of the Maroni, notably the Abounami, the Great and the Little Inini, the Waki.

F 131 361 161 463

F 167

The Maroni Creoles are nearly all foreigners, the great majority originally from the British West Indies, more specifically from Santa Lucia and Barbados; there are very few among them from the French West Indies or the Guianas.

F 197

All speak dialects with a French base, very close to one another but rather different from the very special patois of the

/82/

Territorial Implantation of Lineages

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311 As we have shown, the Refugee Blacks are caught between contradictory imperatives:

--Their legal thought, centered on joint possession by the lineage, pushes them to distribute land among the lineages in compact blocs;

[182]
[241] --The geographic environment, and most especially the ravages of the manioc ant, obliges them to give to each individual the possibility of abruptly changing his territorial sector or to hasten the planned rhythm of his fallow fields.

The solution which has imposed itself has been to divide the lands of each lineage into a certain number of zones scattered on the two banks of the river. Instead of finding large blocks with a single holder, we are going to find sectors sometimes rather small. With that exception, the legal principles of the Refugee Blacks keep all their practical value.

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423 Each village possesses a certain number of landing places or dégrads /wharfs/, from which fan out a certain number of paths. The wharf is the center of a territorial zone within which the members of the lineage fan out, pushing their clearings farther and farther, until they meet the clearings created by other lineages.
• [489] At this moment a boundary is in effect created, at least in some points (1).

[184]

1. Among the Djuka it happens that a wharf may be common to two lineages and that the boundary may be marked by a big road perpendicular to the river and starting from the wharf; this system corresponds to a concern for establishing more precise boundaries between groups occupying land to the maximum. It is not observed anywhere in Boni country.

/174 cont./

764 Cemeteries. There are two cemeteries in Boni country: one on the lands of the Dikan lineage for the people living on the French bank, the other downstream from Kotika for the inhabitants of that village. They are ordinary places which nothing indicates from the bank, for they are covered like the rest of the country by secondary forest. The dead are buried there in graves aligned parallel to the river, about seven meters apart. The dead are placed with heads turned toward the river. No separation by lineage exists within the cemetery.

The graves are not marked by any decoration, and at the end of about ten years, the mound having settled down, no trace of the burial remains.

[767] The graves are never cleaned. Only the ɔlɔmã heads, who have received special instruction, know the graves of the principal chiefs and the boundaries of the cemetery.

769 [754] [775] The Boni never go to the cemetery alone and do not make offerings on the graves of their near relatives. Someone who would frequent the cemetery alone would be suspected of being a wisimã seeking to capture the yɔrka of a dead person.

764 • 487 Even if they are right near the villages, cemeteries are never connected directly to them by paths, and the dead are transported by boat. By proceeding thus they hope to isolate the villages from evil influences.

766 [761] [784] [184] If someone dies by drowning, he is buried away from the cemetery. According to Mr. W. F. van Lier, among the Djuka all drowned persons are supposed to have been victims of a kunu; the Boni do not have this conception and declare that they have lost the meaning of this custom; one notices, however, that they observe mourning for the drowned according to the usual rites.

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A (p. 580)	B (p. 581)	C (p. 582)	D (p. 583)

Chart of Positions of End Plate /facing p. 580/

DIVISION OF LANDS AMONG THE LINEAGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE PRINCIPAL BONI VILLAGES

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Photographic montage made with the help of photographs of Field Trip 007/200 IGN Guiana
Scale 1/20 000 Taken in October, 1956

[End Plate -A]

6:Hurault--581 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

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Scale 1/20 000

[End Plate - B]

6:Hurault--582 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

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Scale 1/20 000

[End Plate-C]

6:Hurault--583 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

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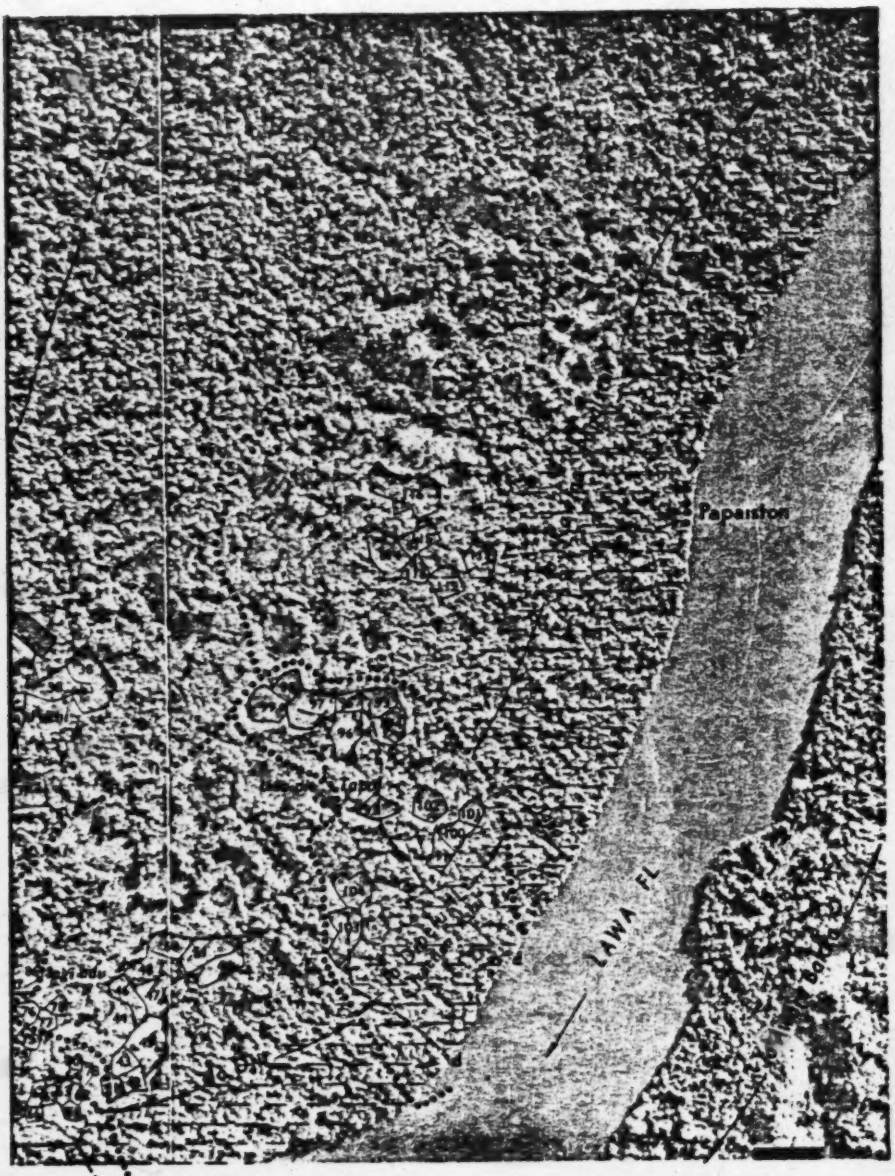

Agodé Permanent villages
clearings
floodable zones
boundaries not known
farming habitation
dégrad (wharf)
path
approximate boundaries of agricultural land

[End Plate-D]